

New York Theaters and Their Attractions

'Montmartre' Shows Varying Grades of the Primrose Path

Thrills of 'The Cat and the Canary' and 'Bulldog Drummond' Compared to the Saner Terrors of 'The Bat.'

By LAWRENCE REAMER.

It will be necessary to anything like a complete enjoyment of Pierre Frondale's "Montmartre," which has at last had a hearing in English at the Belmont Theater, to feel the delicate difference in the grades of the primrose path to which the French public so sensitively responds. It is not given to all to understand in this subtle connection the difference between tweedle-dum and tweedle-dee. When the young musician takes his beloved from her native Montmartre to the quieter stretches of the Rue de Lille, she grew weary of the dullness of such respectable existence. The two were not married. Neither were the two young persons who visited them, even if the female of the species brought her embroidery along.

But in the eyes of a French audience there is a marked difference between the violet rescued from the shadows of the Red Mill and the two old pals impenitently lingering there for business reasons who come to visit her. It is not easy to distinguish between the three. They were together enjoying the delights of the easy life under the swinging vanes in the preceding act. Why then should the young composer so bitterly resent their appearance in his drawing room? Why was the virtuous if unmarried visitor who alternated her embroidery with a session at the piano, so grieved when the heroine danced to one of the waltzes of Chopin? Did not Maud Allen find her inspiration in the same music? Miss Duncan and her pupils did the same thing. Why not la petite de Montmartre?

But there are much more important distinctions than these mere musical experiences. With a complete understanding of the differences in the social ethics of Paris, there will be the maximum of enjoyment for those who visit the representations of "Montmartre," which, as the most modern treatment of the popular French legend of the little Cinderella who was no better than she might have been, is well worth seeing. Most of these social differences will remain to the average American completely unfathomable.

Terrors of 'The Cat and the Canary.'

The horrors of "The Cat and the Canary," which are helping to acquaint many New Yorkers with the beauties of Walter Jordan's new National Theater, belong rather to the class of thrill that imparts life to "Bulldog Drummond" than to the saner terrors of "The Bat." The English melodrama at the Knickerbocker Theater is determinedly mystifying beyond all possibility. It hesitates at no expedient which may cause the gooseflesh. It makes no pretense to rhyme or reason in its abandonment to the task of throwing such a scare into its audience that escape is impossible. Of course there is one way out. One door is always perilously near and is moreover open. But it leads to uproarious and irresistible laughter. Luckily the spectators of "Bulldog Drummond" pass it safely. None of them ever enters. Such a way out would be fatal.

The terrors of "The Cat and the Canary" are more closely related to this kind of drama than they are to the more reasonable shocks of "The Bat." The action of "The Bat" passes in an entirely plausible country house. John Willard's mysteries at the National Theater are to be experienced in an old home that has been all but closed to the world for twenty years. Its walls are more-over provided, not only in the library but in the sleeping rooms, with swinging panels. No architecture suited more exactly to the needs of the playwright could be conceived.

The English melodrama has its most exciting scenes in a madhouse. The authors of both these plays have taken it, it will easily be seen, the fullest license to pile on the agony. In other words they have created arbitrarily the machinery of their shockers. In using as the foundation for "The Bat" Mrs. Rinehart's novel "The Circular Staircase," one of the best American detective stories since "The Leavenworth Case," the adapter, Avery Hopwood, has been compelled to maintain some approximate resemblance to reality.

But the public is not analytical. It is most readily susceptible to any confusion the theater may offer. There is little or no Missouri about its attitude in the presence of an invitation to bewilderment. An audience puts itself docilely at the disposition of the playwright to be manipulated as he will. Luckily for this popular form of diversion, the two new mystery plays do the trick admirably.

Duse in Fedora Role.

A correspondent writes to ask when Eleonora Duse acted the title role of Sardou's "Fedora" in this city. The performance, according to available statistics, took place at the Fifth Avenue Theater during that memorable first visit of the great Italian actress. Then she acted a number of roles in her French repertoire which she never repeated. She finally ceased to act any French play but "La Dame aux Camellias." She played Sardou's Muscovite princess at the Fifth Avenue Theater in 1892. Other rare joys of that first season here were the Italian actress's playing of Cyprienne in "Divorcements," "Tosca" and "Fernande."

Brander Matthews told Prof. George Odell of Columbia University that it took the acting of Signora Duse to show how shallow as a play "Fedora" really was. She acted with her convincingly natural manner in a play which had been treated in the past with the fiery emotionalism of Mme. Bernhardt's dramatic method. He might as well have said that the divine Sarah demonstrated how poor as a play was "Magda" by acting with her incorrigibly romantic manner such a drab study of middle class German life. It is quite true, however, that Eleonora Duse never possessed any special patience with the feverish emotionalism of French drama, although her changes in "La Princesse Georges" were commended even by Dumas himself.

The performance of an old time best seller of the footlights like "Fedora" always exercises a salutary effect. It is quite possible to acquire admiration for the technical perfection of some scenes without blinding the spectator to the superiority of the dramatic products of the day. Even in the contracted version made by Louis N. Parker, or whoever was responsible for the more or less mutilated form of the drama used by Miss Lohr, it is possible to become deeply interested in the exposition of the opening scene.

This feeling continues until the fact impresses itself on the spectator that the playwright rather than fate or inescapable life is directing the whole current of the play in the direction he means it to go and in which he can best control it. Every emotion and every action is designed for the greater glory of the dramatist. Without any closer approximation to nature, interest soon takes its flight.

'Fedora's' Lack of Reality.

Prof. Matthews' view that Eleonora Duse's manner of acting the play showed up Fedora's lack of reality might be taken as an indication of what the performer used to do for these pieces. Sarah Bernhardt must of course have been most authentic in her interpretations since Sardou wrote this series of dramas for her. She has not only outlived the famous playwright but his creations as well. Certainly there could never have been a Fedora equal to hers. It was the one role in which her various mannerisms were all appropriately shown. Whether she was snarling out her raucous hatred or growling her threats of vengeance or wooing, in her amorous cantabile, the slayer of her betrothed, the genius of the French actress, was perfectly framed in the playwright's words.

Her acting of the first scene will always be unforgettable. The princess was interested in the search for proofs of the identity of the assassin of her lover. She followed intently the accumulation of evidence. It was plain, however, that her real thoughts were on the wounded man in the bed behind the closed doors. Her agonized expression revealed her apprehension of what might be happening in the chamber from which the doctors had excluded her. Her sudden, panther-like passages proved the intense anxiety that could be relieved only by physical movement when all other action was impossible. The whole tragedy of the dying man behind the

doors was pictured in her face, proclaimed in her broken tones, emphasized by her impassioned gestures. Such hurdles in a part like this as the final scene of the third act may be difficult to take impressively. But it is a situation like that which opens the play which tests the true genius.

Actresses succeeded equally well in some of the other plays even when their methods bore no resemblance to Mme. Bernhardt's. The French actress never acted in "A Scrap of Paper." Nothing could have been more brilliant on the shining heights of comedy acting than Mrs. Kendal's performance in this role. Her acting of the famous old play left its text glistening like the forest branches as the sun falls on the frozen rain. Great art in the theater can usually adapt itself to any form of drama, although Prof. Matthews was right in saying that Duse was ill at ease in the theater of Sardou.

Those accustomed to lament the prevailing artistic conditions in the theater must have less than usual this season on which to found their despair. There has, to be sure, been little or nothing of dramatic significance from the playwrights. But there was never such general improvement in the manner of putting before the public the message the dramatist had. Nothing especially important may have been said. Yet in most cases the manner of saying it was admirable. Stagecraft is ever improving.

There are, of course, altogether impatient managers who make no effort to keep step with the times. They probably represent the old view that unless there is sufficient strength in the material there is nothing to be gained by the way in which it is put before the public. Doing the job well for its own sake is a theory that makes no appeal here. The one disheartening element here is the occasional justification of this unenlightened view. One of the most ineptly acted and inartistically "produced" of

the comedies this season met with uncommon popular success. Would the manager responsible for this old fashioned mediocrity have earned a cent more with an intelligent and modern interpretation of his play?

Yet everywhere else there is constant improvement. When Edward Goodman sets out on as modest an enterprise as the stock season at the Greenwich Village Theater he puts a play of Galworthy before the public in faultless fashion. Augustin Duncan does equally well by "The S. S. Tennessee," although it is intended to do no more than fill the small audience room of the Belmont Theater. The Neighborhood Theater has established its reputation for skill in producing the difficult works that make up its repertoire. In a way one expects intelligence and perception in these smaller enterprises. It is most of all encouraging that the same qualities are showing themselves in the leading theaters as well.



JOHN E. HAZZARD and Miss MARJORIE GATESON in "For Goodness Sake" Lyric



Miss FLORENCE ELDREDGE in "The Cat and the Canary" National



OSCAR SHAW and The DARLING TWINS in "Good Morning Dearie" at the Globe



Miss IRENE BORDONI To Appear in "The French Doll" Lyceum

First Performances

MONDAY.
LIBERTY THEATER—"To the Ladies," comedy by George S. Kaufman and Marc Connelly, authors of "Dulcy," to be presented by A. L. Erlanger and George C. Tyler, with Miss Helen Hayes and Otto Kruger featured.
LYCEUM THEATER—Miss Irene Bordoni starred by E. Ray Goetz in "The French Doll," comedy adapted by A. E. Thomas from the French of Paul Armand and Marcel Gerbodon.
LYRIC THEATER—"For Goodness Sake," musical comedy, book by John E. Hazzard, Miss Marjorie Gateson, Charles Judels and Fred and Adele Astaire.
PARK THEATER (Afternoon)—First of a series of matinees by the Friends of Comedy, under the direction of Miss Maria Leonard. They will offer "Don Juan in Hades," a discussion in one act by Bernard Shaw, and "The Treason and Death of Benedict Arnold," an heroic fantasy in two scenes by John Jay Chapman. In the cast will appear Misses Mary Boland, Marie Shotwell, Julia Hoyt (Mrs. Lydig Hoyt) and John Waller.
TUESDAY.
HUDSON THEATER—Henry Baron will make his deferred opening of Edmond Houdet's French comedy, "The Rubicon," with Violet Heming.
WEDNESDAY.
PUNCH AND JUDY THEATER (Afternoon)—Miss Mary Shaw will present Bernard Shaw's play, "Mrs. Warren's Profession," playing the leading role.
SATURDAY.
EARL CARROLL THEATER—Earl Carroll will dedicate his new playhouse with a play of his own, "Bavaria." The cast will include Henry Herbert, Miss Helen Freeman, William H. Powell, Miss Carlotta Monterey and Miss Maude Elburne.

'The Squaw Man' Joins Plays in Brooklyn

William Faversham will be seen at the Majestic Theatre all this week under the direction of Lee Shubert in a revival of Edwin Milton Royle's famous drama of the Far West, "The Squaw Man." The play has on view at the Astor Theatre, New York, during the last few months. To the Montauk Theatre for the week come Henry Miller and Blanche Bates in James Forbes's comedy, "The Famous Mrs. Fair," first seen in New York for an entire season at Henry Miller's Theatre, and since known to Chicago and many another city. "Welcome Stranger," the comedy by Aaron Hoffman, which had a good run at the Sam H. Harris Theatre, Manhattan, last season, is the offering of the Yellow-Shubert Theatre next week. Sam H. Harris will present the piece identically as it was seen at his own theater, with the original cast, including George Sidney. The Dolly Sisters will double here, besides making their bow at the Palace in Manhattan. Others will be Bert Fitzgerald and brother Lew; Lockett and Lynn, and James Burke and Eleanor Durrin.

'Marjolaine' Before Audience of Ministers

An unusual theatrical performance will take place at the Broadway Theatre to-morrow afternoon, when Russell Janney will present the complete production of "Marjolaine" before an audience composed entirely of clergymen. It will be his answer to the charges made by the Rev. Dr. John Roach Straton that "the theatrical managers of to-day are capitalizing the sacrifice of womanly modesty and making merchandise of those female graces and charms that God has designed for pure and holy ends." In an open letter to Dr. Straton Mr. Janney said: "In defense of the entire theatrical profession, and in answer to your charges, I am going to give this special performance of 'Marjolaine' in order that the clergymen of New York may have an opportunity to judge for themselves whether the American stage, as an institution, is as base as you claim it to be." Invitations have been sent to more than 2,000 ministers, priests, rabbis and clergymen of every faith. Many prominent theatrical stars are expected to attend.

AT UPTOWN THEATERS.

Somerset Maugham's comedy, "The Circle," will be presented by the Selwyns at the Shubert-Diviera Theatre for the coming week with an all star cast, headed by John Drew and Mrs. Leslie Carter. Fiske O'Hara, actor-singer, will appear in his latest success "The Happy Cavalier," at the Bronx Opera House.

BURLESQUE AT COLUMBIA.

At the Columbia Theater next week a burlesque called "A League of Nations" will be given by the Sam Howe Company. In the company are Cliff Branton, Helen Tarr, Norma Barry, Gertrude Exton, Harold Carr and Henry J. Coyle.

Did You Hear - - - ?

That Galli-Curci Is to Succeed to Miss Farrar's Role in 'Butterfly' and That Plays Are Now Written on the Knee.

By LUCIEN CLEVES.

EVEN after Miss Farrar has departed from the familiar boards of the Metropolitan Opera House and set out on her highly profitable concert tour there are still to be representations of her most popular work, which is Puccini's "Madama Butterfly." Nor does the managing director of the Metropolitan mean that the opera shall lose in interest through the departure of the beloved American singer. In order that there shall be a worthy successor to Miss Farrar the role will go to Mme. Galli-Curci. The Italian soprano tried it with success in Chicago; she is anxious to show what she can do in other than coloratura roles, and the management of the Metropolitan means that there shall be a popular performer in this work. These reasons have combined to make Mme. Galli-Curci the next Cio-Cio-San. No aspiring dramatist need lose heart whatever may be the difficulties under which he is compelled to produce his masterpieces. Who could ever suppose, for instance, that it was possible for a man to write a play on his lap? Yet it was in just that informal way that John Willard put on paper "The Cat and the Canary," which is just now drawing all the town that is fond of shivers to the National Theater. Mr. Willard, according to the most veracious accounts, was moving when the idea of the play kept him so excited that he just had to write it then and there. Of course in passing from one flat to another there is little opportunity for literary exertion. But while the movers might rush in and carry out a table Mr. Willard felt that his lap was comparatively safe. Wherever he was his lap was likely to be. So he scribbled industriously there while his furniture, and finally he and his wife were transported from one home to another. Mr. Willard, who also acts a part in the play, wrote it as a sketch for a

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